

THE LISTENING POST

JANUARY/FEBRUARY
2026



THE ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL
MEETING WILL BE
FEBRUARY 8, 2024 IMMEDIATELY
FOLLOWING WORSHIP
for the purpose of receiving the annual
report and electing our congregational
nominating committee, financial review
person, and treasurer.



Pastor Niki's Ponderings

January

Years ago, I stumbled upon an author by the name of Donald Miller. He came into prominence with a book entitled "Blue Like Jazz: Nonreligious Thoughts on

Christian Spirituality." I enjoyed his style of writing; reflective on the ordinary, everyday encounters. But it was his book "A Million Miles in a Thousand Years" that truly struck a chord for me. This book chronicles his journey of editing his previous book from a "meandering memoir to a structured narrative" for the movie screen, and editing his life in the process to mean something more than what it has become. And while I have notes written all throughout one of my copies of the book (I bought a second when I met him in person, just so he could sign it), there is one quote in particular on my mind for the new year we approach.

"A story is based on what people think is important, so when we live a story, we are telling people around us what we think is important."

Consider some of your favorite stories, biblical or not. One of my all-time favorites is The Lord of the Rings trilogy by J.R.R. Tolkien. I watch the movies around this time every year. There are numerous characters in this sweeping story, but the ultimate goal is to rid Middle Earth of an ultimate evil and its power so that the people of Middle Earth can live their lives in peace and freedom from said evil. To Tolkien, the acknowledgement that there is evil in the world was important, but more important was the ability of ordinary people to come together, in spite of their differences, and to stand against that evil. And they did it not just for themselves, but for the good of all in Middle Earth.

Most of us are not living lives that require us to battle orcs and goblins with swords and axes or to scale rough terrain to throw a powerful ring into a volcano. However, we are all living stories. We live a story as individuals. Our family has a story that it lives. Our community, our church, the people of God...we all live a story together too.

Our story is telling people around us what we believe is important. If a person in the community hasn't heard of our church, is unfamiliar with the kinds of ministry we do, doesn't know about how we encounter the living God, then what kind of story are we telling? Are we telling a story that grips the hearts of those who hear it? Or one in which

someone can eat popcorn, play on their phone, and not feel like they missed much? Do we need to reevaluate how we tell it?

Last year at this time, we took our daughter to see “The King of Kings,” an animated retelling of the life of Jesus based on a manuscript Charles Dickens wrote for his children. In the movie, we not only get to experience the story of Jesus for ourselves, but we get to see one of Dickens’ children (and his cat) experience it too. For our daughter, it was like experiencing the story of Jesus with another child, just like her. She gazed with wonder at his birth story, laughed as Jesus interacted with his friends, asked us questions of curiosity, and curled in my lap with sadness when Jesus died. And when Jesus came back from the dead? Oh, the joy in her dancing around the aisle in front of us!

What do you believe matters the most to our church? How do we live our story so the world knows the reason for the hope that we have? And how do we invite others to be a part of God’s story with us?

Blessings, Pastor Niki <><

February

Well, here we are in that time of year again. The weather is cold and snowy. It still gets dark earlier than we would like. It just feels...ho-hum. Unless you’re incredibly excited your team is actually going to the Superbowl this year! (I know...I just had to.)

Truthfully, I’ve considered the whole phenomena of modern day professional sports a lot lately. What is with all of the excitement that can be felt for our professional teams (or even college teams, for that matter.) Living an hour away from Buffalo, NY, I continually heard about the “4 Superbowls in a row, but no ring” debacle from older Bills fans. Here in Pittsburgh, there are so many stories about the “Steel Curtain”, that incredible defensive line in the 1970s that helped the Steelers on their way to their own 6 Superbowl rings. Most people here don’t want to hear about my team’s own 6 Superbowl rings, the greatest comeback in an NFL Superbowl (Atlanta will never be made to forget the numbers “3-28”), or Drew Bledsoe’s concussion that led to the young Tom Brady

becoming the starting quarterback of the New England Patriots. Being a New England Patriots fan, but living outside of New England, can be a social difficulty. Geoff looks amused by how excited I get when I see someone wearing a Patriots jersey or hat in Steelers territory. It’s like finding another alien amongst humans.

We call ourselves Patriots Nation, just as many of you belong to Steelers Nation. We wear similar clothing to others in our “nation,” share collective memories of big games, particular players, and groan about shared frustration with our franchises. Do you see where I’m heading with this?

It’s a shared identity. A community. A group of believers with stories, and in some seasons, hope.

Just as those who are part of a community of fans find common ground on which to connect, may it also be so with the Body of Christ. Nowhere do we see this more clearly than in passages like Acts 2, when the fellowship of believers gathers its possessions to share with one another, or in the coming together of the tribes of Israel to form one holy people as they entered a covenant with God. Ecclesiastes reminds us that “two are better than one”, as they can work together for a common end. And Romans 12 serves as a reminder that even with how different our gifts may seem to be, there is always a way that God intends to bring fruit from our sharing of our gifts with one another.

One of our favorite wedding gifts came from one of my aunts. She made a quilt with matching pillows. One side uses Steelers fabric and the other uses Patriots fabric. Even when we couldn’t agree about what side should be displayed, the blanket always kept us warm.

In difficult and divisive times, it is important for us to gather and to remember that finding common ground, having real and honest dialogue, listening to one another, and continuing to love as Christ taught us to love, is paramount. May it always be so for each of us.

Blessings,
Pastor Niki <><



1. Taylor Coulter
2. Becky Kane
4. Bonnie Machak
6. Stephanie Perona, Bill Speer
10. Nancy Campitella, Darla Tamski
13. Caelin Kaminski, Ted Kaskan

14. Avery Zukas
16. Nancy Reynolds
23. Butch Schrecengost
26. Josh Gartley, Joan Orr
31. Barry Hall, Joyce Wildi

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1. Peggy Marangoni
9. Amber Gartley
14. Linda Gould
16. Carson Coulter
18. Kenneth Travis
19. Tammy Shaeffer
21. Marisa Chetsko
23. Amanda Hubbard
25. Donna Schrecengost
28. Karen Travis



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



Every Sunday ~ 10:00 AM

After Sunday School, join your family in the Sanctuary or visit the PrayGround! Be sure to take advantage of the Kid's Table in the vestibule where you'll be sure to find plenty of quiet activities for you to do during worship service

Update on the
HOT chocolate BAR
January 4, 2026

Christian Ed. Kids' Sunday School Classes held a Hot Chocolate Bar fundraiser to bolster Summer Church Camp funds. The kids (and their helpers) raised \$203, increasing the camp budget by that amount.

Thank You to all the kids and helpers and all of you supporters.

**ATTENTION:
COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS NEEDED.
EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL:
APPLY AT FOOD BANKS, MEALS
ON WHEELS, FOOD 4 KIDS,
HABITAT FOR HUMANITY
You get the idea!**



✓ Remember to pass along the message while you DO the mission. Meals-on-Wheels (412-400-0975) – drivers, cooks, prep people daily on M – W – F. St. Vincent de Paul (724-478-1113) M-Sat

Food bank opportunities:

- Feb. 6 (Fri) Westmoreland County Food Bank – 7:45 AM – St. James Catholic Church Activity Center (behind the Church)
- Feb. 16 (Mon), Apollo-Ridge Food Bank (packaging) – 8:00 AM – Glenn Bush Ford, right side, around back
- Feb. 18 (Wed), Apollo-Ridge Food Bank (distribution) volunteers at 7:30 – 8:00 AM - public at 8:00 AM – Glenn Bush Ford (see above)



Have a new neighbor or
new baby in the neighborhoods

The Mission Ministry Team would like to extend its community outreach by offering "Welcome" and "New Baby" baskets to residents new to the area and to those with an addition to their family. Although still in the early stages, we are asking for your help in identifying families that might fit these categories. Please message/contact Pam McMunn at 724-664-8303

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:
Consider volunteering on an AUPC CommitteeHere's why:

"Volunteering is at the very core of being a human. No one has made it through life without someone else's help." *Heather French Henry*

"Volunteers don't get paid, not because they're worthless, but because they're priceless." *Sherry Anderson*

"Volunteers do not have more time --they just have more heart." *Anonymous*

You don't need to be in charge ~ Just lend a hand! See Pastor Niki or call the office!

COMMUNITY COMPASSION



AUPC Emergency Fund

Year End Assistance Totals: Utilities: \$2,229.59, Rent: \$5,190.00, Misc.: \$1,624.22, Gift Certificates: \$1,400.00, Home Repair: \$175

The above totals helped 32 local families with financial concerns and 21 local families with food. Thank You for your Emergency Fund donations in 2025!

Food 4 Kids

A Community Sponsored Program

We currently have 57 kids enrolled in the Food 4 Kids program. We have had new volunteers come to help on packing day and new volunteers helping to deliver the food. We are thrilled to have them and encourage anyone to help with this much needed program. Also, Pastor Ericka from Apollo Free Methodist has been lending a hand. Our next packing day is scheduled for Wednesday, January 28 at 3:00 pm. Your support is always appreciated.



Our Food 4 Kids family has lost a special supporter, Pastor Jason Jodon, who passed early January. Pastor Jodon encouraged his Assembly of God congregation to collect and donate food, monthly, to the Food 4 Kids program. We send prayers and sympathy to his family and congregation.

Candy

MEMBERSHIP & OUTREACH



WE'RE BACK!

Free Community Program

- Everyone Welcome

Friday, Feb. 13 ,

6:30 PM

KIDS KRAFTS

has a spot for YOU!

2nd Friday,

Sept -Jun



PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

**PW Quarterly Meeting –
Saturday, March 14 @ 9:30 AM
Regular Meeting**

~Planning Ahead: Spring Salad Bar – Saturday, April 18~



If you're looking for unique cards for any occasion, please check out the variety available in the vestibule made by our own Craft Ladies. Cost is 3 for \$2 or \$.75 each.

Thank You, Presbyterian Women, for your generous contributions to AUPC and to the community at large. Your hard work and giving hearts have benefited far too many causes and individuals to list here. Your gifts truly enriched 2025 for so many and we noticed! Thank You!

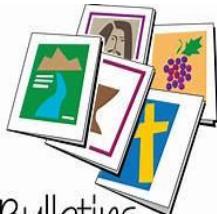
STEWARSHIP AND FINANCE

WHERE WE STAND at the END of DECEMBER 2025



December Income: \$9,749.20
December Expenses: \$11,311.09
December Income to Expenses: -\$1,561.89
YTD Income: \$125,257.53
YTD Expenses: \$137,597.14
YTD Income to Expenses: -\$12,339.61

Don't forget . . . You may purchase/sponsor a bulletin, at any time during the year, to remember/honor a loved one. Donations of \$20 per bulletin are requested. Your donation will be used to defray copying costs of our weekly bulletin.



Bulletins

\$\$ PER CAPITA \$\$

AUPC's 2026 per capita, as formulated by the Presbytery of Kiskiminetas, has been calculated at **\$40.66 per member (a correction of the previously published \$39.24)**. This amount is then multiplied by the number of **active members** from the previous year. AUPC had 106 active members when the 2026 per capita was calculated, therefore being responsible for **\$4,187.98** to be paid before the end of 2026. We urge all members to pay their individual per capita during the months of January and February. The total amount collected during those 2 months is sent to Presbytery in a lump sum and the balance due is divided by the 10 months left in the year. This method of monthly payments eases any stress on the general budget that a large, one-time payment might cause. **AUPC is responsible to pay for each member listed as active whether or not those members pay their share.** Our goal is to keep our financial commitment just as we have done in the past. With your help, we will be able to meet that commitment and do it with a manageable monthly payment. Your per capita payment will be welcomed at any time throughout the year if you are unable to contribute during January or February. We thank all of our members for their continued support, financially, spiritually, and in-kind giving. AUPC is truly blessed.

Stewardship & Finance Team

WORSHIP AND MUSIC



SUNDAYS 11:00 AM

Join us in person or
livestream on YouTube



AUPC Acolytes have their 2026 schedule and are ready to light the way.

Maybe you weren't aware, but we have 12 fine young people as acolytes.

Please let them know you are appreciative of their service!

Still
Ringing!



Please contact Miss Shelly if you're interested in The Children's Bell Choir.

Lenten Worships & Luncheons					
brought to you by the United Apollo Ministerial Association (UAMA)					
February 25	March 4	March 11	March 18	March 25	
12:00pm	12:00pm	12:00pm	12:00pm	12:00pm	
Boiling Springs Presbyterian 1668 PA-56, Spring Church w/Rev. Dr. Lucas of Quality Life Svcs. Apollo	Lutheran 3623 Clifford of First Evangelical Lutheran - Apollo	New Life Baptist 319 Lutheran N. 2 nd St., Apollo, w/ Pastor Brad Caroline Ferko, EdD, of Spring Church Lutheran	Apollo Free Methodist 1027 PA-56, Apollo, w/ Rev. Julie Kolacz of New Beginnings UMC	Apollo Free Methodist 1559 PA-56, Apollo, w/ Rev. Julie Kolacz of New Beginnings UMC	New Beginnings UMC

February 22 ~ First Day in Lent

Who's Who on SESSION?

Lead by Rev. Niki Atkinson, your current Session Members and their area(s) of service are listed below.

Jessica Carwile ~ Ministry & Mission Teams

Scott Hollabaugh ~ Admin Team Chair & Building & Grounds

Glenna Kanish ~ Ministry Team (combination of Membership & Outreach, Ministry and Christian Ed.)

Pam McMunn ~ Mission Co-chair

Nancy Russo ~ Mission Team

Amy Shupe ~ Admin Team: Stewardship & Finance Chair, Church Treasurer

Bill Speer ~ Admin Team, Building and Grounds

Laura Uncapher ~ Admin Team & Clerk of Session

Carl Zukas ~ Admin Team, Personell Chair

HAPPY GROUNDHOG DAY!



JUST

LOVE!

Happy Valentine's Day!



LOVE

Is patient and is kind
Doesn't envy
Doesn't brag
Is not proud
Doesn't behave itself inappropriately
Doesn't seek its own way
Is not provoked
Takes no account of evil
Doesn't rejoice in unrighteousness
Rejoices with the truth
Bears all things
Believes all things
Hopes all things
Endures all things
Never fails

1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-8

Prayer List! How it works: Please list prayer concerns on the back of the attendance card found in your bulletin. We will place these names on our "Immediate" prayer list for three weeks. The *newest names will appear in italics*. On the third week we will **'bold' the name**. The prayers of concern will then move to the "Continuing" list and will remain there three more weeks and then rotate off, unless otherwise requested. If you don't see a name that had previously been there and that person still requires prayer, please list the name again. Also, please list spelling corrections, if needed.

IMMEDIATE *Mary K., Amanda C, Dreana, Jeff Kirkman, Diane Chavara, Nancy Reynolds 90 years young!, Dorothy, Carol, Dave, Sue Ellen & Nick, Kathy Wilson, Shannan, Sara Burke, Jim, Carol, Niki's Dave, Ben & Ashley, Dommy, Missy ☺, Joyce Wildi's Marshall ☺, Doris Patterson family, Thunder Robinson, Kind family who lost baby, Aiden Miller family.,*

CONTINUING *Mark & Kasey Gizzler & family, Mary, Kristen, family of Sandy, family of Jim Dunmire, Gene Griffith, Debbie, Dave Highfield, Ron in church ☺, Dolores, beautiful sanctuary at Christmas, Ken Bowman, Jess's grandfather, Christmas Tea JOY!, Melinda here ☺, Family of Frank Lombardi, mary, KVBC ☺, Ronan, Ashley, Dan Peppler, Wendy, Ashley, Patty Pavetti, Janelle, Danny, Doris Patterson, Perona family.*

ONGOING

Nora, Eric Ribar, Missy, Katie, Eddie, Donnie Riggle, Gary Harkcom, Bill & Linda Crabtree, Frank Kovak, Josh Hanus, Shannon Pruss, Chris Hilker, Carol Gallagher, Linda Gould, Snedecor family, Alan Shockey, Bonnie Machak, Lani Knox, Nick Arnoldy, Benjamin Mumaw, Sean George.

MINISTRY *All those affected by the Coronavirus, flu, and RSV and those working in the health care field, first responders, research, and government. Food 4 Kids, AUPC Deacon's Emergency Fund, Support for our church, EPR Mugombwa; Victims of violence and natural disasters; President Donald Trump, our country, other world leaders, our church and its leaders, the war & military personnel, wounded military at home and in hospitals, terrorist victims, Kiskiminetas' Rwanda Partnership*

